1. (Amended) A communication method implemented in a communication network for allowing members of an affinity group to send status information to and receive status information from other members of said affinity group, said communication method comprising:

a. forming an affinity group containing two or more members;

a1

b. storing, in each individual members' communication device, status information concerning each other member of said affinity group;

c. when the status of any member in said affinity group changes, sending a status update message from said member whose status has changed to said each other member of said affinity group;

d. receiving said status update messages concerning each other member of said affinity group at said each other member's communication device; and

e. updating said status information in said each other member's communication device when a status update message concerning said any member is received.

4. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 2 wherein each individual member selects the status items from a list of available status items that are reported to each other member of the affinity group.

a2

7. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 1 further including the step of automatically detecting status changes of a member and sending status update messages to said each other member of said affinity group when a status change is detected.

a3

8. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 7 wherein the status of a member is monitored by said member's communication device and wherein said communication device is programmed to automatically transmit a status update message to said each other member of said affinity group when a change in status is detected.

10. (Amended) A communication method implemented in a mobile communication network for allowing members of an affinity group to send status information to and receive status information from other members of said affinity group, said communication method comprising:

a. forming an affinity group containing two or more members;

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b. storing member status information data in each mobile communication device used by said members;

c. sending a first status update message from a first member's communication device to a centralized server when said first member's status changes;

d. forwarding said first status update message from said server to each other member of said affinity group, including a second member of said affinity group;

e. receiving said status update message at said second member's mobile communication device and updating said status information in said second member's mobile communication device when said status update message is received;

f. sending a second status update message from said second member's communication device to said centralized server when said second member's status changes;

g. forwarding said second status update message from said server to each other member of said affinity group, including said first member of said affinity group;

h. receiving said status update message at said first member's mobile communication device and updating said status information in said first member's mobile communication device when said second status update message is received.

a5

13. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 11 wherein each individual member selects the status items from a list of available status items that are reported to each other members of the affinity group.

16. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 10 further including the step of automatically detecting status changes of a member and sending status update messages to said each other member of said affinity group when a status change is detected.

a6

17. (Amended) The communication method according to claim 16 wherein the status of a member is monitored by said member's communication device and wherein said communication device is programmed to automatically transmit a status update message to said affinity group when a change in status is detected.

19. (Amended) A mobile communication device for allowing a member of an affinity group to send status information to and receive status information from other members of said affinity group, said mobile communication device comprising:

a. a memory for storing member status information data;

b. a transmitter for transmitting status update messages to other members of said affinity group when said member's status changes;

c. a receiver for receiving status update messages from other members of said affinity group;

d. a processor operatively connected to said memory for writing status information to and reading status information from said memory, said processor being programmed to:

1. generate a status update message when said member's status changes for transmission by said transmitter to each other member of said affinity group; and

2. update said status information stored in said memory when a status update message is received from another member of said affinity group.

22. (Amended) The mobile communication device according to claim 19 further including means for selecting the status items from a list of available status items that are reported to each other member of the affinity group.

23. (Amended) The mobile communication device according to claim 19 further including means for designating a period during which status updates are enabled.